

**WASHINGTON, DC** – The U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation today authored by Representative Rob Wittman (VA-1), the Permanent Electronic Duck Stamp Act. This legislation aims to permanently make federal duck stamps available for purchase online. This modernization of the program would allow sportsmen across the country to more easily obtain a federal duck stamp, rather than requiring an in-person visit to a local Post Office. Sale and distribution of federal duck stamps fund conservation of vital waterfowl habitat across the country.

“There is no cost to the taxpayers, there is broad bipartisan support for this innovative idea and this convenient twenty-first century delivery system will be utilized by thousands of American sportsmen in the future. Allowing the purchase of duck stamps online is an important technological advancement and it is time to make this a permanent feature of federal law,” Wittman said. “This is a small but common sense step to making government work more efficiently for citizens.”

Representative Ron Kind (D-WI), the bill’s lead co-sponsor, said: “For decades, the sale of duck stamps has generated critical funding for habitat protection and wildlife conservation. Making duck stamps available for purchase online means greater convenience and accessibility for hunters, collectors and outdoor enthusiasts and more revenue for the important conservation efforts that duck stamps support.”

For 79 years, millions of Americans have strongly supported the Federal Duck Stamp Program. Each year, hunters, bird watchers, stamp collectors and wildlife enthusiasts have traveled to their local Post Offices, National Wildlife Refuges and sporting goods stores to obtain their annual stamp. Since 1934, more than 120 million federal duck stamps have been sold nationwide. Of that total, 1.25 million were purchased in Virginia. With the sale of these stamps, more than \$800 million has been collected and deposited into the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund. These monies have been used to purchase or lease over 5.3 million acres of vital wetlands and essential waterfowl habitat that have been incorporated within the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Unlike many states, however, which allow consumers to obtain their annual fishing and hunting licenses online, there was no authority to purchase a federal duck stamp online. With the passage of the Electronic Duck Stamp Act of 2005, the Federal Duck Stamp Program took a technological step forward. This law established a three-year pilot program to allow individuals to purchase their stamps online, and the Fish and Wildlife Service was directed to evaluate the

effectiveness of this new electronic program.

This legislation would make the online purchase of federal duck stamps a permanent feature of federal law. Just like the pilot program, the electronic proof of purchase will both fulfill the requirements for waterfowl hunters to possess the stamp and allow visitors free access to our nation's 553 national wildlife refuges. After 45 days, the proof of purchase will expire and the purchasers must possess the traditional paper stamp to receive its full benefit.

The Permanent Electronic Duck Stamp Act is supported by conservation organizations, including Ducks Unlimited and the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation.

"Yesterday's vote to pass the Permanent Electronic Duck Stamp Act of 2013 is an important one for waterfowl hunters across the country. The electronic duck stamp gives sportsmen and women the opportunity to purchase their stamp conveniently, while continuing to support the conservation of waterfowl habitat. I want to thank Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus Vice-Chair, Representative Rob Wittman for his leadership in sponsoring this common sense piece of legislation," Jeff Crane, President of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation stated.

During the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, an identical bill passed the House by a vote of 373 to 1, however, the Senate did not consider the legislation.

*Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He serves on the House Natural Resources Committee.*

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